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ABSTRACT

Using the newspaper to provide opportunities for students to learn current events and further develop writing skills is described. Seven activities outline how to use cooperative learning to teach current events. Four types of assignments based on newspapers develop various types of writing skills: (1) personal writing; (2) descriptive writing; (3) expository writing; and (4) persuasive writing. The next activity focuses on the triangle style of writing. Social studies activities provide active involvement in speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills. Practice locating specific details in newspaper articles develops reading skills. Political cartoons and comics provide ideas for using humor in student activities. An example of a bio-historical poem shows an unrhymed poem that gives each student an opportunity to listen or read and then write about a figure in the news without the difficulties of composition. The final idea for using a newspaper is to create a file box of 14 activities listed. A student contract for studying the theme of using the newspaper provides students the choice of contracting for certain requirements and the agreement of teacher and parent. (CK)

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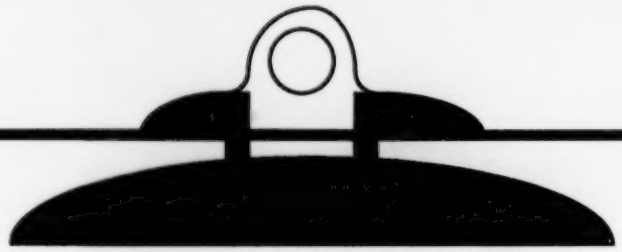

1993 Downeast Social Studies Conference

CIVIC COMPETENCE AND THE PACE OF WORLD EVENTS

A CLIP BOARD OF ACTIVITIES

FOR

USING THE NEWSPAPER

BY

ANN LOCKLEDGE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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IDEAS FOR USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING TO TEACH CURRENT EVENTS

MAKE A WEB — In a group of 3 or 4 each student selects one reoccuring news event. The group decides on a style for their word web. Then simultaneously on a piece of chart paper or poster board, students write in main concepts and supporting elements represented in today's news or of the newspaper they are using. Finally bridges are drawn representing the relationship of the ideas expressed.

PARTNER'S CIRCLE — Students stand in two concentric circles. The inside circle faces out; the outside circle faces in; with equal numbers in each circle. The two people facing each other are partners. The teacher asks a question involving news that has been in the paper during the week. Partners talk over the answer and hold up hand when they think they have the answer. The teacher calls on one pair. As soon as a correct answer has been given, the students take a step to the right and find their new partner. Another question is asked and the activity continues.

GROUP ROUNDUP — In small groups (4 to 5) each person tells of one thing that was in the news that week. After each has spoken, the group decides which is the most important event of the week and why. Groups share with the class to see if there is concensus.

PARTITION — The teacher puts a poster in each corner or section of the room identifying one news event or one point of view about the news of the week. A limit is put on the poster announcing the number of people allowed in the group. Each student moves to the part of the room representing an alternative they wish to discuss. Students discuss within corners and appoint a spokesman to paraphrase their ideas for the rest of the class.

HEADS TOGETHER — After students are in prearranged groups, the teacher asks a question. The students consult to make sure everyone agrees upon the answer. One group is called upon to supply the answer and the other groups signal whether they agree. The spokesman for the group rotates with each question asked.

INTERVIEW — Each current events day, one of the prearranged groups (6 groups of 5 each) is assigned the task of having each member become an expert on one news event. Each "expert' goes from group to group on a signal answering questions about the event. Each group is responsible for having a list of prepared questions. As students interview the expert, one person in the group is assigned to take notes. Roles of interviewer and note taker rotate each week. Each group conducts a review session using the notes before a quiz is given.

JIGSAW — Each student on the team becomes an "expert" on one section of the newspaper. Experts work with members from other teams assigned the corresponding section. Upon returning to their teams, each one in turn teaches the group.

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POSSIBLE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS BASED ON NEWSPAPERS

THE INTIMATE VOICE : PERSONAL WRITING

The Journal - In a journal you just ask students to record their reactions to what they are reading or discovering.

Autobiographical Narrative - you ask the student to be a person in a given time period or the subject of one of the news articles and then describe the setting, present the central action, and then like events in real life, move chronologically.

Personal Essay - Instead of re-creating an experience the writer explains the effect it has. It focuses on a general theme or conclusion of the author. This is good for getting a reaction to a continuing situation -- or one that links with similar historical events.

THE INFORMATIVE VOICE: DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Personal Description - These begin with an expression of the writer's main impression. It can be approximated with lists or word association. When I say _____ what comes to mind... List details according to sensory appeals. Most news articles can provide a starting point.

Factual Description - These are mainly concerned with physical data. Ask the student to paint a picture with words. Sentences are short and simple. Some news articles are of this type providing factual details but little of the emotions within.

THE EXPLANATORY VOICE: EXPOSITORY WRITING

Process Description - Trace the steps involved in the process of doing or using some item. The sports pages or self help columns are often examples.

Classification - Explains what something is composed of. Have the student define something like investments by classifying the various types of information provided by the financial pages.

Definition - this is somewhat the same as developing a concept map. Students must take into account the connotative meaning. An extended definition involves more than a dictionary.

Essay Answers - Much like newspaper articles - Use inverted triangle and cover the most important things first. Who, what, when ,where and why are covered in the first paragraph. Just seeing if this can be found in the first few sentences provides a building block for later writing.

THE ARGUMENTATIVE VOICE: PERSUASIVE WRITING

Proposition Argument - This is used to convince someone that your proposed action is the correct one. You state your idea and then give supporting reasons and evidence telling how the reader would benefit. It reflects the biased convictions of the writer. Less concerned with facts than the logic of the conclusions. Refuting an editorial or letter-to-the-editor with which one does not agree helps the decision making process.

Problem-Solution Argument -State and analyze a current problem in one of the articles and then convince readers your solution would be best. The writer must point out the weaknesses in other solutions.

There is also The Critical Voice which is writing about literature or the arts and The Authoritative Voice which is research paper. Certainly journalists use these voices at times and students might like to try their hand.

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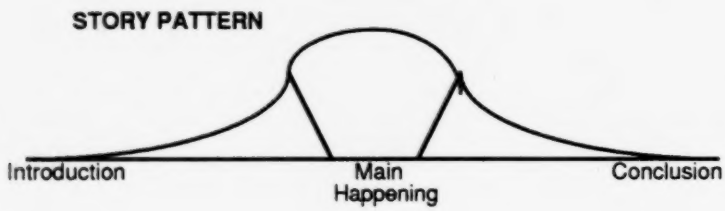
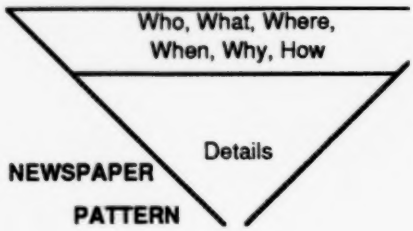
HOW TO REPORT USING THE TRIANGLE STYLE OF WRITING

Hard news stories usually deal only with the most important and exciting events in a story and the ending is often given first. The pattern for this type of story looks like a triangle. this is in contrast to the pattern of writing that you find in the stories you read. In stories the reader is led into the main events and then these happenings are tied together in the conclusion. When writing essay answers for tests, one usually uses the triangle type of writing. You want to get your main points across first. The explanation of why you chose this answer can follow.

The two diagrams below show the difference between the two styles of writing.





Take one of the open-response questions provided and answer it below using first the story pattern and afterwards using the triangle style newspaper pattern.

Story_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

News_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITIES
INVOLVEMENT WITH CONTENT

ORAL//EXPRESSIVE

SPEAKING

1. Debating issues
2. Present a character in a play
3. Make a tape
4. Interview someone for an oral history
5. Group discussion
6. Give a speech
7. Oral reports
8. Sing songs
9. Give oral directions using a map

WRITTEN/EXPRESSIVE

WRITING

1. Describe a field trip
2. Label a map
3. Write down a recipe from afar
4. Make a brochure
5. Write a research paper on a country
6. Correspond with a penpal
7. Write a speech you might have given
8. Compare and contrast two people
9. Make a list of topics
10. Reorganize material into a chart

ORAL/RECEPTIVE

LISTENING

1. Children's theater
2. Bring a speaker to class
3. Recording of a famous speech
4. Video tape that depended on words
5. Listening to family stories
6. Folowing oral directins
7. Comparing music from different places
8. Oral history tape

WRITTEN/RECEPTIVE

READING

1. Find a fiction book on the lesson topic
2. Look at travel brochures
3. Read aloud to parents, siblings or peers
4. Read lots of short biographies
5. Use an encyclopedia
6. Read what someone else researched
7. Edit another student's essay
8. Evaluate a comic stip on the topic

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WHO, WHEN, AND WHERE, and WHY

CUT OUT THE FIRST 3
PARAGRAPHS OF AN
ARTICLE FROM THE
NEWSPAPER AND
PASTE THEM HERE

Locate Specific Details. Underline the words that tell who, when , where and why or how in this article. Write each word you underlined in the correct space below

Who _____

_____

When _____

_____

Where: _____

_____

Why _____

_____

USING THE HUMOR IN POLITICAL CARTOONS AND COMICS

Societal concerns and political commentary are often expressed by means of humor. This humor is almost always representative of one point of view and is difficult to understand until the background, the metaphor, and the symbolic conventions are explained. As you look at your favorite comic strips or cartoonists, consider these questions: How is this an example, extension or update of something I teach? Would the children enjoy this if I helped a little? How could the theme be explained to my students? What controversy or issue is represented? What concepts would you need to explain to students? What bias does the cartoonist exhibit? What focusing questions might I ask students that would enhance their understanding of the issue?

GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT HUMOR, COMIC STRIPS, POLITICAL CARTOONS

Political cartoons are thought provoking devices
Cartoonists point out the dichotomies in our society.
Getting people to laugh at a situation may be more influential at getting support than editorializing or sermonizing about it.
Comics often provide excellent nonexamples of concepts showing deliberate misinterpretations.
Humor is often used to point out human foibles.
It may be easier to use humor to explain a value laden situation than to lecture about it.

You can use a comic or cartoon to:
catch attention and focus on the topic of your lesson,
as a lead-in to some of the information in your input,
or with words cut out it can become guided practice.

CUT OUT A CARTOON

PASTE IT BELOW

DECIDE WHEN TO USE IT

WRITE QUESTIONS TO ASK

REPORTING USING CURRENT EVENTS BIO-POETRY

The Bio-Historical Poem is an unrhymed poem that gives each student a chance to listen or read and then write about a figure mentioned in the news without the problems of tedious composition.

THE SETUP OF THE POEM IS LIKE THIS:

Line 1:	First name only
Line 2:	Four traits that describe the person
Line 3:	Sibling of .....Son of... friend of ....
Line 4:	Lover of.... (3 ideas)
Line 5:	Who feels..... (3 items)
Line 6:	Who needs.... (3 items)
Line 7:	Who gives... (3 items)
Line 8:	Who fears... (3 items)
Line 9:	Who wants to see ... (3 items)
Line 10	Resident of .....
Line 11:	Last name only .....

EXAMPLE

Hillary
Educated, forceful, caring, informed
Wife of Bill, Mother of Chelsea
Lover of the law, equality for women, family rights
Who feels useful, dedicated, purposeful, powerful
Who needs support from the Congress, cooperation from lobbyists
Who gives of her time, her knowledge, her skills, her voice
Who fears negative publicity, lack of action, discrimination
Who wants to see health care for all, success for her husband
Resident of the White House
Clinton

Try It:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9 _____
10 _____
11 _____

ACTIVITIES FOR USING YOUR NEWSPAPER

Cut out each of the following ideas and paste them on a separate 3x5 or 4x6 file card. Store in a file box or envelope labeled:

USING YOUR NEWPAPER

1. Circle all of the cities listed in today's newspaper. Find each city on a map or in an atlas. List each city with its latitude and longitude either by estimating on the map or looking it up in the gazetteer. Tell why it is important.

2. Go through the newspaper and cut out photographs, advertisements and stories about different jobs or careers. Decide which of these can be done by women, which by men, which would be most interesting. Make a poster.

3. Find pictures of people that exemplify leadership. Paste the picture on a piece of notebook paper and then write below it about the way in which the person is showing himself/herself to be a good or bad leader.

4. Find an article in the newspaper about the President of the United States or another national or international figure. Write a diamante poem about what that person is doing using this format: 1st line-title of office; 2nd line-2 adjectives that describe him; 3rd line-a phrase about what he is doing; 4th line-2 adverbs or participles about how it is being done; 5th line-name of the person.

5. Find a problem or controversy that is discussed in an article in the newspaper. Write a letter to the editor or an editorial telling what you think should be done and why.

6. Find an article that tells how something has changed. This change may be physical as in the use of appearance of a building, legal as in the way laws are applied, or a change in attitude and beliefs. Write an outline for a speech to convince people that this is a change for the best.

7. Cut out articles from the paper and post them on a cardboard bulletin board according to whether the topic is local, state, national or world news. Estimate the percentages in each category and draw divisions in a circle showing how you think news stories are distributed.

8. Cut out the first 3 paragraphs of an article from the newspaper and paste them on a piece of paper. Below the article identify: Who, When, Where, How.

9. Cut out a picture from the newspaper and paste it on a piece of paper. Below the picture list: Who, What, Where, When. Use this information to write one or two sentences that explain the picture.

10. Cut out the weather information from the newspaper and paste is on a piece of paper. Answer the following questions for your weather diary.

What is the day and date?
When will the sun rise tomorrow?
What is the weather prediction for here?
What will the weather be like someplace you just read about?
What are the high and low today for your place.
In general what is the weather like across the c country?

11. Find the movie ads in the paper. Cut one out and paste it on a piece of paper. Answer the following questions:

What is the name of the theater?
Does it appear to be part of a chain?
What kind of rating does the movie have?
Who is the star? Other actors/actresses you like?
What does it cost? Are any discounts available?
Take the answers to the above questions and put them together to form two or more logical sentences.

12.Cut out a number of graphs from the newspaper and paste each on a 5/8 card. Write multiple choice or true/false questions near the bottom of the card. Under the A,B,C or T,F, make a hole with a paper punch. Put your pencil trough the hole of the correct answer and circle it on the back of the card.

13. On the editorial page find editorials, columns, or cartoons that represent two sides of a question. Write the topic on a piece of paper and divide the paper into 2 columns. List reasons under the headings PRO and CON. This can be used as preparation for a debate.

14. Paste a USA weather map on a piece of paper. Then turn to the sports pages and locate where each of the teams were playing the previous day. Mark these on the map. Explain how the weather might have influenced the outcome of the game or the attitude of the fans.

STUDENT CONTRACT ON THE NEWSPAPER

Our theme for the next three weeks will be THE NEWSPAPER. Read and talk to your parent(s) about this contract. When you have made a choice about the work you will do, sign your name and ask your parent and a friend to witness it.

I will contract for a(n): _____

Student signature: _____

Witnesses: _____ (Parent)

_____ (Friend)

I agree to help however I can: _____ (Teacher)

All students must complete the first set of requirements which will result in a grade of "C." Any work which is not of acceptable quality will be returned for recycling.

CONTRACTING FOR A 'C' -- complete all of the following

____#1 - Construct a dictionary using both meanings and sentence examples with a minimum of ten words that you have found in the newspaper that you did not know.

____#2 - Complete 2 of the activities in the Using Your Newspaper file box.

____#3 - Read several articles of interest to you. Cut out the headline and the first three paragraphs. Underline the who, what, when, where, and why.

____#4 - Read about some of the political or ideological movements that are taking place all over the world. Label and color code maps that locate these points of conflict. Make a chart of their characteristics.

____#5 - Bring at least one article for the Class Bulletin Board on classifying the news.

____#6 - Take and possibly retake the test on Current Events until you have achieved a minimum of 70%.

CONTRACTING FOR A 'B' -- complete #1 and four more

____#1 complete all of the requirements for a "C"

____#2 Choose a person mentioned in the news that you might roleplay. Write a personal essay about the person and be prepared to have a conversation between your character and one chosen by a classmate.

____#3 Find five examples of the use of mathematics in one issue of a newspaper. Cut out the articles and paste them on notebook sheets. Write a word problem to be solved.

____#4 Read the weather page for five days. Make a chart showing changes in weather. Write a paragraph contrasting the weather in two parts of the country.

____#5 Do two more activities from the Using Your Newspaper file box .

____#6 Add ten more in-the-news words to your dictionary from your reading.

____#7 Write a poem about some news event following one of the formats presented (diamante, autobio, cinquain, prepositional, etc.).

CONTRACTING FOR AN 'A' -- complete #1 and four more

____ #1 Complete the five required activities for a "B".

____ #2 Participate in the development of a mural illustrating events around the world this year.

____ #3 Construct a diorama showing one of the areas of the world that is in the news.

____#4 Keep a record of the movement of tides for one week. Chart low and high tides with times, and phases of the moon.

____#5 Write a 2 page persuasive letter to the editor on why we should or should not move to using the metric system of measurement in the United States.

____#6 Complete 2 more of the activities in the Using Your Newspaper file box.

____#7 Prepare a group presentation of a conference or series of meetings that has been taking place. Role play the leading characters and have them tentatively solve a problem.

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